

-AUSTRALIA

## FISHING INDUSTRY GAINS NEW STATUS, NETS \$352 MILLION IN '81

Canberra THE AUSTRALIAN in English 23 Apr 82 p 18

[Text]

AFTER years in the wilderness, the Australian fishing industry is finally gaining recognition as a major Australian primary industry.

This follows three years of heavy lobbying in Canberra by the Australian fishing industry Council which represents 21,000 people in the commercial fishing industry.

Confirmation of the fishing industry's new status came with the appointment of Dr Robert Bain as first assistant secretary of the fisheries division of the Department of Primary Industry.

Dr Bain was previously a senior officer of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE).

The Government has also decided the BAE should extend its economic research and advisory service to cover fisheries.

This reflects Canberra's awareness of the increasingly important role of the industry in the Australian economy.

The president of the fishing industry Council, Mr Fred Connell, said most people were surprised by the size and income of the local industry.

He said: "The value of fish exports from Australia this year will be almost double that of the fresh and canned fruit industry.

"It is well over double that of the cotton industry, \$50 million greater than the mutton exports, and about three-and-a-half times the value of lamb exports.

"Fish exports will double the value of live-sheep exports, and exceed the value of butter

and cheese exports by over \$100 million.

"This has been achieved despite the fact that the industry has received very little in the way of subsidies and assistance measures available to other primary industries.

"Indeed there is very little public or media recognition of the industry's status and importance within the overall economy."

Mr Connell said that estimates for the last financial year show the value of exports to be over \$250 million out of a total production valued at \$352 million.

"The value of production has been growing at 17 per cent a year for the past decade with exports having to compete in strong international markets against heavily-subsidised foreign fleets and stiff trade protection barriers," he said.

Mr Connell spoke of the relief within the industry at the growing evidence that it is about to receive due recognition for its contribution to the nation.

In the early 1960s, the fishing industry was still a cottage-type industry, with small boats fishing within sight of land for catches destined mainly for sale in home ports.

"As a major export industry, it boasts a growing number of large ocean-going vessels, fishing far out into the 200 nautical miles of the Australian fishing zone," Mr Connell said.

"Indeed, the proclamation of the zone in November 1978 forced the Australian fishing industry offshore and into the big league," he said.

CSO: 5200/7539

## AUSTRALIA

## FURTHER DETAILS ON MANDATORY SHIP REPORTING SYSTEM

Canberra THE AUSTRALIAN in English 15 Apr 82 p 15

[Text] AUSTRALIA'S surveillance of all shipping approaching or leaving the country has been tightened by making the Australian Ship Reporting System (AUSREP) mandatory.

Under AUSREP, ships are required to send sailing plans, position reports and final reports through coastal radio stations to the Australian Coastal Surveillance Centre (ACSC) in Canberra, which has responsibility for the Australian Search and Rescue (SAR) area.

Vessels at sea will have to send position reports to the centre every 24 hours.

AUSREP was previously a voluntary system, but new legislation made it mandatory for all Australian and foreign ships from April 1.

"In the event of a vessel failing to lodge a position report, a computer at the ACSC will alert staff who will take action to establish its safety," the Minister for Transport, Mr Hunt, said.

"Should no further information be obtained from the vessel, search operations will normally begin within 24 hours of a missed report - although this may vary depending on the particular circumstances of an incident.

"The AUSREP system will be mandatory for all Australian ships while in the AUSREP area and for all foreign ships from arrival at their first Australian port until their departure from the last Australian port.

"However, foreign vessels will be encouraged to participate during their entire presence in the Australian area."

He said the services of AUSREP were provided free by the Federal Government in the interests of greater maritime safety.

The AUSREP system, which is the first of its kind in the world, was first introduced on a voluntary basis in December, 1973.

In recent times, almost 200 ships from many countries have been using it each day.

Mr Hunt said the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation (IMCO) had endorsed and recommended ship reporting systems on a world basis and had viewed AUSREP as an international prototype system.

"The Government considers that a mandatory ship reporting system is one method of implementing Australia's search and rescue obligations under the 1960 and 1974 United Nations Safety of Life at Sea conventions," he said.

"The Australian SAR area is the largest in the world.

## AUSTRALIA

## SPECIAL AIR, NAVAL UNITS PROTECT OFFSHORE OIL RIGS

Sydney THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD in English 28 Apr 82 p 7

[Article by Tom Ballantyne]

[Text]

THEY wallow in the murky, choppy waters of Bass Strait, grotesque, metallic monsters pumping the precious oil and gas from the dark recesses beneath the seabed a hundred metres below.

Each containing more than 8,000 tonnes of structural steel, defying some of the roughest waters in the world, the Bass Strait oil production platforms are more than a source of energy.

They are a mainstay of Australia's energy policies and a huge contributor to the nation's economic well-being.

For several days this month they were also a target, the focus for a deadly serious game involving Australia's "super commandos," the most highly trained soldiers in the country, the elite Special Air Service unit.

The game reached a tragic pause at about 8 pm on Friday, April 16 when Trooper David O'Callaghan, 21, from Perth, died from air embolism during a diving exercise.

It was only a pause because, despite the accident, the game did not end. The exercise continued for several days afterwards.

That in itself is an indication of how seriously the Federal Government and the Defence Department take the possibility of a terrorist attack on the platforms.

If there had not been an accident, it would not have become known publicly that the SAS, which is headquartered in Western Australia, is involved in protecting them.

Army sources described the operation as a "secret defence department exercise in the oil fields off Sale."

Several such exercises have been held over the past 18 months, and although the Army will release no details, the scenarios go something like this.

An oil platform has been attacked and captured by a group of terrorists. Their purpose could be to make a multi-million-dollar ransom demand.

They could be fanatics wanting to draw attention to their cause or could perhaps want to sabotage Australia's partial self-sufficiency in oil and gas.

Whatever it is, the SAS, Australia's front-line weapon against international terrorism, is called in.

Highly trained for the most dangerous of tasks — the British SAS was responsible for breaking the Iranian Embassy siege in London in 1980 — the unit's operations are cloaked in secrecy.

Their exercise this month in Bass Strait is understood to have involved a mock raid on a platform with the purpose of recapturing it from terrorists.

Part of that raid included an underwater approach to the production platform, during which the accident took place.

There is no doubt that everyone involved takes the possibility of a terrorist incident very seriously indeed. The oil platforms are, after all, a tempting target.

There are eight production platforms operating in Bass Strait today. By 1984 there will be another four in place at a cost of \$1 billion.

Esso's 1981 annual report disclosed that development spending on Bass Strait was up \$11 million to \$199 million in the year and production from the Strait saved Australia \$4 billion on its import bill.

covering one ninth of the earth's surface.

"Response vehicles for SAR purposes are therefore limited due to the size of the area.

"The AUSREP system will ensure the optimum use of available response resources by reducing the time between

distress occurring and the initiation of SAR action."

Mr Hunt said the majority of ships in the Australian SAR area were already participating under the voluntary AUSREP system, indicating the degree of support by the international shipping community.

CSO: 5200/7537